

If you draw under Act of June 27, 1890, and will soon reach age of 65, 68, or 70, write for a blank to The National Tribune, Washington, D. C.

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ONE DOLLAR A YEAR.

WASHINGTON, D. C., THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 1906.

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War of the Rebellion

OPENING OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

By JOHN McELROY.

XLII.

THE ARMY'S DARKEST HOUR.

Beginning of the Regular Siege—Reorganization—Terrible Bombardment. Summons to Surrender—A Bluff that Failed—Another Gallant Assault and Singular Repulse.

At 6 o'clock on the morning following the defeat of May 27 Gen. Banks sent a flag of truce to Gen. Gardner, requesting a suspension of hostilities until 2 o'clock, to enable the dead and wounded to be brought off the field.

Gen. Gardner replied that he would grant it, on condition that Banks withdraw all his men to a distance of 800 yards and that the vessels in the river cease firing and return to their original positions.

Banks declined to do this, but renewed his request, and promised to send only unarmed parties to carry off the dead and wounded. Some 12 letters were exchanged on the subject, consuming three-fourths of the day. Gardner complained that men were working on batteries and skirmishers were pushing forward, and Banks replied that he had sent orders for the work to cease and the skirmishers to halt. Finally a truce of four hours was agreed upon, to run from 3 o'clock.

Farragut sent a note to Banks suggesting that he attack along the river bank, beyond the flat of the rebel line, where the fleet could assist him with its fire, but somehow this plan did not commend itself to Banks.

While the dead and wounded were being brought in, Banks's men were making good use of the time in carefully studying the positions in front and laying their plans for establishing batteries and lines of investment.

On the morning of May 29 the real work of the siege began, with the troops taking up substantially the positions they had gained during the assault of May 27. The engineers went busily to work designating positions for batteries, tracing lines for breastworks and surveying roads through the woods and across the ravines to bring all parts of the army into ready communication. The shortened line enabled the divisions to be closed up on one another and the investment completed.

Brig.-Gen. Richard Arnold, the Chief of Artillery, was ordered to bring up the siege artillery, which was manned by the 1st Ind. H. A., and was rapidly emplaced, with the field guns, behind suitable cover. Altogether, Col. Irwin says, there were 40 heavy pieces, of which six were eight-inch seacoast howitzers, eight 24-pounders, seven 30-pounders, four six-inch rifles, four nine-inch Dahlgrens, four eight-inch mortars, three 10-inch mortars and four 13-inch mortars. Besides these were 60 field pieces, ranging from six to 20-pounders.

The nine-inch Dahlgrens were lent by the fleet, and were mounted in battery and worked during the assault by three gun crews (51 men) from the Richmond and one crew (11 men) from the Essex. They were under command of Lieut. Col. Edward Terry, of the Richmond, and did splendid service. The battery was first established 748 yards from the enemy's works, but later advanced to 340 yards.

Banks reorganized his army, in preparation for the new phase of operations. Despairing of getting any reinforcements from Gen. Grant, he stripped the Teche country of the slender garrisons he had left to guard the roads to New Orleans and gained eight regiments, which he distributed around to make good to the various divisions the losses sustained in the assault.

Gen. Geo. L. Andrews returned to his position as Chief of Staff, and Gen. Dwight was assigned to the command of Sherman's Division, and it and Augur's Division were brought to the front, under command of Gen. Augur. The Right Wing, composed of Grover's and Wetzel's Divisions, was placed under the command of Grover. Halbert E. Paine's Division was brought to the center, to cover the Jackson road, the heavy artillery and assist Grierson's cavalry in standing off Logan's Cavalry, a very strong body of horsemen, who were cutting off communications with the country outside and besieging the besiegers.

The 1st Mass. had been mounted during the Teche Campaign, and was now called the 3d Mass. Cav., and assigned to Grierson.

The siege batteries, which were numbered from 1 to 24, were established in the best locations that could be secured, at a distance of from 600 to 1,200 yards from the enemy's works, and made a rough semicircle about

Atchafalaya and Alabama, a position of the highest strategic importance, since it controlled so large a portion of the communications of western Louisiana and Texas. The place itself was raised but slightly above the surface of the water, and tradition is that the Indians had built it as a refuge from the floods. In the very excellent history of the 16th N. H., by Adj. Townsend, the following description is given of the place and the life there:

"When we took possession, Butte-a-la-Rose was essentially a little island surrounded for miles with water, excepting on the west, where land could be reached through a swamp at a distance of five or six miles.

"At the north, also, there were two or three plantations on the shores of the Atchafalaya that were not entirely under water; but at the south, as far as Brashear City, and east, as far as Port Hudson, even the arable land was covered with water in many places to the depth of from seven to 10 feet, so that the small flat-bottomed stern-wheel steamers that ply in those waters were sailing at that time through ditches and over corn and cane fields. Nearly all fencing was out of sight under water.

"Butte-a-la-Rose, aside from being a very strategic position from a military point of view, proved also to be such a good place for the army, that it was the grand rendezvous of mosquitoes, fleas, wood-ticks, lice, lizards, frogs, snakes, alligators, fever bacteria, malarial microbes and every conceivable type of malarial poison, and from about sunset till daylight the mosquitoes came upon us in dense battalions. Had it not been for the mosquitoes, we would have been able to stay there for some time.

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thank nature and art for gauze and muslin.

"For miles on still nights the croaking of frogs and hooting of owls could be heard, and were at first amusing but afterwards distressing. The moccasins, snakes, whose bite is deadly, were so bold and numerous that they some-



NEAR BUTTE-A-LA-ROSE—BUSH-WHACKERS FIRING ON FEDERAL TRANSPORTS.

times had to be shot out of our path while we were passing between the barracks.

"Alligators, too, at night while hunting and killing their prey kept up an almost continuous splashing, which was a fearful enough in those desolate regions, and more than once those treacherous and ravenous creatures compelled our pickets, who at night were not allowed to fire upon them, to move in near to our barracks for safety.

"We must not forget in this enumeration of pests that we had, nevertheless,

"It should be borne in mind, too, that many of our number, in consequence of previous exposures and hardships, were sick and debilitated when they reached that place. As would be expected, a more pitiful sight than our regiment presented during the last two weeks of our stay at Butte-a-la-Rose hardly can be imagined.

"Wasted away by various forms of disease, men who had weighed 200 pounds or more were reduced to half that weight. One of our company officers, Capt. Sanborn, Co. E, whose ordinary weight was considerably above 200 pounds, could not tip the scales at 50.

"Some of our men were covered with burning and painful eruptions, others were yellow as saffron, others were shaking with ague, others were bloated with dropsy, and all were sallow and emaciated."

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be provided, as they would prove a most excellent prescription for such of our men as were suffering from cholera.

"A stack of recommendations extolling their merits and enumerating the remarkable cures wrought by them was forwarded, and accordingly two or three cases of Hostetter's Bitters were put on the invoice.

"These bitters with other goods reached Butte-a-la-Rose in safety, and were sent to those who could pay for them and given to those who were without funds. But some of the men, who probably were more chivalrous than the others, took overboard in consequence became staggering drunk.

"The Adjutant, therefore, had the mortification of discovering that though he was President of the Temperance Society of the regiment, he had furnished almost pure whisky to the men under the label Hostetter's Bitters. But as no ill had been intended he was not disposed from office.

"We not only were without a sutler at that time, but our Chaplain, in consequence of sickness, had gone North or leave of absence, and the commissary master was not with us, and most of the time during our stay at Butte-a-la-Rose we were without a Surgeon.

"By Campbell, Esq., Dr. Sanborn was North on a furlough; Dr. Fisk, besides being overworked, had been assigned duty, if we remember correctly, at Brashear City, and Dr. Sleeper was late in reporting, though, as we recall the facts, it was without fault on his part.

"Meanwhile our men were sickening rapidly and dying almost daily. Had it not been that occasionally a negro or poor white would come to the garrison with a row-boat load of fresh vegetables, together with a few chickens and eggs and a small quantity of poultry, which were exchanged for coffee and tea, we must have starved, in our sick and nauseated condition, on such rations as the Government then supplied.

"The atmosphere a little after sunset and on through the night was almost insupportable, and our sick men when breathing it were conscious that every breath was so much more poison added to their blood.

"There must have been on our rolls at one time or another while we were at Butte-a-la-Rose not fewer than 600 or 700 men. But under date of May 26 the regiment could muster only 150 for duty.

"It should be borne in mind, too, that many of our number, in consequence of previous exposures and hardships, were sick and debilitated when they reached that place. As would be expected, a more pitiful sight than our regiment presented during the last two weeks of our stay at Butte-a-la-Rose hardly can be imagined.

"Wasted away by various forms of disease, men who had weighed 200 pounds or more were reduced to half that weight. One of our company officers, Capt. Sanborn, Co. E, whose ordinary weight was considerably above 200 pounds, could not tip the scales at 50.

"Some of our men were covered with burning and painful eruptions, others were yellow as saffron, others were shaking with ague, others were bloated with dropsy, and all were sallow and emaciated."

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WINCHESTER TO APPOMATTOX.